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NIH Says It's Moving on Nutrition Research

Senator George McGovern (D-SD) returned this month to badgering the National Institutes of Health, and, in particular, the National Cancer Institute, for what he has long alleged to be neglect of research on the relationship between nutrition and health.

The difference this time, however, was that the chieftains of NIH and NCI have concluded that the Senator is better situated than they originally estimated to cause them difficulties, and that prudence calls for them to be at least partially responsive to his prodding.

The forum for McGovern vs. the biomedical research establishment is the Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Nutrition, a relatively weak staging area for taking on NIH, since the Subcommittee lacks jurisdiction over

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the agency's money or laws. But what the Subcommittee does possess is the authority to summon witnesses and to make them squirm in front of a medical press corps that has been increasingly skeptical toward the management of the National Cancer Program.

The effectiveness of this tactic was demonstrated at a morning hearing on October 2, during which NCI Dirtor Arthur C. Upton — in response to previous demands from McGovern — reluctantly produced the dietary advice that the Senator says should be given a public that's anxious for the best available information on diet and cancer. In addition, both Upton and NIH Director Donald Fredrickson spelled out in voluminous detail the surge of nutritional research activity that they say they have set in motion at the great Bethesda biomedical complex.

Upton, for example, told McGovern that NCI's funds for nutrition research have risen from $18 million in fiscal 1978 to $32 million this year, and that, as part of NCI efforts to interest the research community in this field, "NCI contacted more than 20,000 people identified as having an interest in nutrition research, and announced the availability of funds in 32 of the major medical and nutrition journals."

In response to this drumbeating, he continued, "The total number of nutrition research grants funded in fiscal 1979 was 143. . . a 43 per cent increase over the 103 funded in fiscal 1978."

Upton was followed by NIH Director Fredrickson, who, at previous McGovern hearings, had left the impression that he felt these well-meaning Senators should find something better to do than take up the time of busy research administrators. (Pressed by McGovern, in June 1978, to account for what the Senator regarded as insufficient attention to nutrition research, Fredrickson responded with a crisp lecture on the dynamics of scientific progress: ". . .when we get techniques for measuring nutritional status that are far more microscopic than they are in regard to whether you had a coronary, or you have a tumor of the bowel, then we will begin to see movement there, too. And that is the crucial thing that determines the movement of science," the NIH chief announced.)

This time, however, Fredrickson, in a prepared statement for the Subcommittee, was overflowing with good news about numerous and growing NIH activities in nutrition research.

"I would like briefly to tell you about five major areas in which the NIH nutrition program has expanded" since the June 1978 hearings, Fredrickson stated. And then he ranged over the recent establishment of four university- or hospital-based Clinical Nutrition

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In Brief

The National Academy of Sciences says that fundraising for that atrocious $1.6 million Einstein statue that it erected on its grounds last April is going badly and that it expects to take "a million dollar bath," according to *The Washington Post*. Academy officials blame the statue's poor reviews for the dearth of cash contributions.

The index of recently published hearings of the House Armed Services Committee contains the following witness entry: "Drell, Sidney D., deputy director and executive head of Theological Physics, Stanford University."

A subcommittee of the House Science and Technology Committee reports that it interviewed about 10 per cent of the National Science Foundation's 264 program officers and that the great majority of them said "they could not keep up the with progress in their fields of science as well as they would like because other duties with higher priority took up too much of their time." Program officers don't have all the say, but rank very high in deciding who gets NSF's research money.

. . . GAO to Make Study of Peer Review System

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Units, and said NIH "hopes" to establish more of these units, and to stimulate more investigator-initiated nutrition research projects. Having previously claimed that a shortage of investigators is one reason for lack of more activity in nutrition research, Fredrickson said that here, too, NIH is investing money.

"Clinical nutrition research," he said, "has not been the destination of enough of the top aspirants of the past two decades. There are signs of a renaissance, however. In order to encourage the most promising students," he continued, NIH's National Research Service Award Program is aiming "to provide postdoctoral research training to individuals to broaden their scientific backgrounds and convert their efforts to research in nutrition." In addition, he said, the program is seeking to "enable institutions to make training grants to individuals selected by them for predoctoral and postdoctoral research training in nutrition."

Fredrickson said NIH is now supporting 169 trainees on grants and fellowships, plus 31 NIH intramural trainees. In addition, it is providing 37 Research Career Development Awards, and 11 awards for young academic investigators.

As for the often-asked but terminologically difficult question of how much money NIH is spending on nutrition research, the official answer is $81.1 million for fiscal 1978, which is almost exactly what the official tally cited for 1977. McGovern last year said he figured the sum truly relevant to nutrition at around $20 million. However, the Office of Technology Assessment reported that it could find only $4.7 million worth of activities that matched NIH's own definition of nutrition research. Whatever the amount, the NIH leaders left the impression that Bethesda is now genuinely concerned about the subject — McGovern didn't press for a dollar total — and that, at last, the slow-moving NIH money-giving apparatus is geared up to play its indispensable role in getting on with the work.

NCI's movability in response to the prospect of public embarrassment is symbolized by the "Statement on Diet, Nutrition and Cancer" that it made public at the October 2 hearing. It is a near certainty that, left to its own preference, NCI would not have composed and released this curious document. In fact, the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute has declined to be drawn into a similar exercise in regard to diet and heart disease, contending, as NCI did initially, that the scientific underpinnings are too wobbly to sustain reliable dietary recommendations for the public. The difference, however, is that McGovern put a lot of heat on NCI.

The resulting statement does indeed embody the best available advice on cancer and nutrition, but given the uncertainties that underlie that advice, the statement employs extraordinarily cautious language: "Although no direct cause-effect relationship has been observed for nutrition and cancer in humans," states the introduction, "numerous scientific studies suggest that dietary factors may affect the risk of the disease. Because many other variables also influence the occurrence of cancer, the exact role that diet plays remains unclear. The National Cancer Institute has undertaken a number of activities to explore the role of diet in the causation of cancer, but until definitive results of such studies become available, only tentative inferences are possible."

It then goes on to advise against excessive weight and high fat intake, and to recommend a "generous intake of dietary fiber," a well-balanced diet, and moderate intake of alcohol. Each of these items is then discussed separately for a typewritten page or so apiece; in addition, there's a section on "man-made food additives and contaminants," also of a highly cautious nature.

Having apparently inspired NIH to accelerate its nutrition-research activities, McGovern says that he's now going to inquire into the matter of why it took NIH so long to see what the Senator regards as wisdom. And, for this purpose, he's turning his attention to that sacrosanct process for awarding research money, the peer review system. Following testimony by several nutrition researchers who were fiercely critical of the peer-review system (see page 3), McGovern announced that he has asked the General Accounting Office to conduct a "full audit" of NIH's peer review system, adding that he considers it likely that rigidities and biases within the

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Peer Review "Failed Dismally" on Nutrition

The following excerpts are from testimony on October 2 by Stanley J. Dudrick, Chairman of the Department of Surgery, University of Texas Medical School, Houston, to the Senate Subcommittee on Nutrition, chaired by Senator George McGovern (D-SD).

●

Although the peer review system has enjoyed immense success at the NIH and NCI in the better defined disciplines such as cardiology, gastroenterology, radiation therapy, etc., it has failed dismally in my experience in the evaluation and support of nutrition research. Grant requests and other investigative proposals have repeatedly been evaluated, judged and usually I might add, not funded, by various peer groups comprised, for example, of a dermatologist, pathologist, pharmacologist, veterinarian and oncologist. Many of my colleagues throughout the country have expressed their frustration to me on countless occasions because of this unfortunate and unfair practice . . . .

Even when there is an acknowledged nutritionist or two on the peer review committee evaluating a particular nutrition research project, they are usually basic scientists with expertise in highly specialized areas with no experience or obvious sensitivity in the clinical area of nutrition.

When the NCI finally yielded to increasing public pressure, primarily from the parents and friends of children with malignant diseases, and initiated the Diet, Nutrition and Cancer Program (DNCP), there was very little attention paid to seeking the advice and help of established experts in clinical nutrition in the formation of their advisory board, in the acquisition of staff personnel to write appropriate requests for research proposals or in the assembly of peer review groups. Moreover, only a pittance of financial support from the otherwise massive NCI budget was assigned toward this potentially vast area of endeavor. Then, by the time more than one-quarter of the eight million dollars assigned to this program was frittered away in administrative costs, less than five and one-half million dollars was eventually available for supporting actual research. As one of the 15 members of the DNCP (Diet, Nutrition and Cancer program) Advisory Board, I know from bitter first-hand experience that from the first day we convened, the majority of the members of the board appeared to be more concerned with diverting even the small amount of funds at our disposal back toward their own interests or those of their colleagues rather than supporting novel nutrition research projects of clinical relevance and importance. After engaging in a series of meetings in which a "you scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours" attitude prevailed, a set of guidelines and priorities emerged which doomed to failure any meaningful thrust in the area of diet, nutrition and cancer. Although there was some competent professional input into the writing of the eventual contracts, they were so modified in the course of their passage through the bureaucracy of the NCI that the research work they purported to support was essentially impossible to accomplish under the sets of circumstances and conditions stated in the contracts. A blatant example of this is that in one contract, so much blood was required to be drawn from the patient in order to perform all of the tests that the patient would have been severely anemic within a few weeks. Another contract required that one know precisely what stage an abdominal cancer had reached in a patient without performing an operation on him — an impossible task. Lastly, in a cooperative study, the collaborating investigators were not allowed to evaluate their collective data, but were required to submit their findings to the NCI who had contracted with an inexperienced, unqualified, extramural group to interpret, evaluate and report the results. Unfortunately, the DNCP program has appeared to have

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McGOVERN *(Continued from Page 2)*

system may account for NIH's leisurely approach to nutrition research.

"In particular," he said of the GAO study, "I want the following question answered:

"1. What modifications, such as new study sections, are required to stop the current "Catch 22" situation in which we need peers to review research proposals, but in which we cannot develop peers in new disciplines because they cannot obtain funding with which to gain the needed expertise to become a peer?

"2. It is apparent that a tight funding climate puts great pressure on the peer review process. But is it also possible that too rapid an influx of funds, such as was experienced by NCI in the 1970's, can cause the peer review system to malfunction? Specifically, by rapid budget expansion via the peer review system, have we made bio-medical research such a big business that it is all but impossible today for new institutions and their investigators to break into the NIH system?"

The timetable for this yet-another look at the peer-review process has not been announced. The NIH leadership must necessarily cooperate with the GAO investigators, but you can be certain that they're not happy about these intrusions into their domain from — of all places — the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Subcommittee on Nutrition. —DSG

France: Basic Research Agency Reorganized

Paris. The Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), with 22,150 employees, an $820-million annual budget, and direct or indirect control over hundreds of laboratories and research groups, is the dominant institution in the basic sciences in France. Starting last year, in response to longstanding criticisms that it was remote from the nation's needs and a haven for trivial research, CNRS has undergone a major reorganization. Whether this will actually produce any substantive changes, is, however, not at all certain.

Looking back to the pre-reorganization days, it is clear that the statutes and traditions that governed CNRS permitted many researchers under its mantle to enjoy a vegetative existence — usually in the name of scientific independence — that continually grated on government administrators and various industrial lobbies.

The infirmities of the agency were many, but perhaps the most serious was its administrative structure, which, in accordance with common French practice, was highly centralized, even to the point that foreign travel from CNRS laboratories around the country would have to be approved in Paris. The central bureaucracy, with a staff of 950, had two heads: A general director for research programs and an administrative director for organizational and financial affairs. This latter official, Pierre Greyssel, had burdened some laboratories with the requirement that they use three separate accounting systems. This requirement, plus others of a smiliar nature, had brought him into conflict with the general director, Robert Chabbal, a physicist, but, as is often the case in such clashes, the chiefs of bureaucratic administration tend to win out over the laboratory workers whom they are presumably there to serve.

It was expected that the Minister of Universities, Alice Saunier-Seite, would come to the assistance of the scientists in this matter, but, having no great liking for physicist Chabbal, she chose another course — dismissal of the two chiefs of CNRS, which was announced last year. The "reform" of CNRS, however, turned out to be more complex and difficult than was anticipated.

Pierre Aigrain, the Secretary of State for Research, strongly favored a shakeup of CNRS, but Saunier-Seite was not inclined to let him take over the task. When it rumored that Aigrain wanted to split the monolithic CNRS into autonomous institutes, trade unionists raised protests, to which Saunier-Seite indicated sympathy. (CNRS directly controls 140 laboratories, 25 research groups, and two major research organizations — the National Institute for Astronomy and Geophysics and the National Institute for Nuclear and Particle Physics; in addition, CNRS has close financial and administrative relations with 200 university-based laboratories and 500 research teams known as "associated laboratories".)

With the rumored changes stirring up the unions as well as other interested parties in the CNRS empire, the government as a whole, and Saunier-Seite in particular, decided to proceed with caution.

Thus, she delayed sending until mid-summer the formal decrees of her proposals to the Council of State, which must be consulted in such organizational matters. Because of this timing, the official texts became public at the moment that the CNRS laboratories were emptying out for the summer holidays, and the process was completed before the laboratory staffs had returned. (Formal publication in the *Journal Officiel* took place September 12.)

Prior to the holiday exodus, the trade unions had proclaimed that they would strongly resist the proposed

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PEER REVIEW *(Continued from Page 3)*

collapsed under the weight of its own incompetence . . .

There are other existing problems and contradictions in the NIH nutrition research programs. First, the NIH and NCI must own up to the fact that they simply are not supporting enough nutrition-related research commensurate with its importance in the practice of medicine today. Having once admitted this fact, it would be in their and our best interests for them to establish mechanisms within their agencies by which nutrition research can be truly encouraged and supported. They must desist from the current and past practice of attempting to convince those of us who are truly clinical nutritionists that much of the basic research they do is really nutrition related research. We will not be satisfied by a reassignment on paper of research which truly falls under the categories of atherosclerosis, diabetes or basic biochemistry as being nutrition research. Technically, because all people in all research projects have to eat in order to survive, we could say that all of the research sponsored by NCI and NIH is nutrition-related. This would be the ultimate farce. Therefore, in both of these agencies we must prospectively assemble a group of intramural and extramural experts in clinical nutrition, evaluate the current status of what is truly nutrition research, establish priorities and programs for the future, establish credible peer evaluation groups, and hire a competent professional staff to administer the programs. . . .

. . . Aim is Closer CNRS-Industrial Linkage

(Continued from Page 4)

changes, but in September, only 200-300 CNRS employees, supported by one Socialist and two Communist members of the National Assembly, demonstrated in Paris against the "dismantling of the CNRS."

Actually very little had been dismantled, apart from the old two-headed system. CNRS' old 28-member board, which was chaired by a senior civil servant, is replaced by a 15-member board, chaired by a scientist. In the selection of a new chief for running CNRS, the Secretary of State for Research succeeded in getting his choice, Charles Thibault, a well-known physiologist, who is the first life scientist to head CNRS.

Under another provision of the reforms, a 17-member scientific council is to be established, with 10 of its members to be elected by a "national committee for scientific research," which is to consist of representatives from 41 separate scientific sectors. The national committee excludes administrators and technicians, thus reversing the 1968 reform that permitted non-researchers to have a voice in laboratory affairs. The 1968 change was considered to be a protection against feudal behavior of laboratory bosses.

As far as the trade unions are concerned, the changes add up to an attempt to exclude the scientific community from the making of science policy.

Another change provides for industrial and business representatives to participate on CNRS boards and committees, including the central management of the agency. If this is anathema to the unions, the selection of a senior science adviser to the military, Milhaud-Ducuing, as the new director general is considered to be an even greater affront.

Behind all these shifts and appointments is the government's desire to prod CNRS into paying attention to the country's economic difficulties. Science policymakers here have long been calling for the establishment of links between CNRS and small- and medium-size industry. The Communists and some unions denounce this intention as a sellout to capitalist interests.

In reality, however, it is still to early to determine whether any real changes will be visited upon the ancient CNRS. It has proven durable against other "reform" efforts.—FS

In Print

Food Safety: Where Are We?, a 678-page, wide-ranging collection of papers, newly published by the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry (Washington, DC 20510), from which a limited number of copies are available without charge; or obtainable from the US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402; specify GPO Stock No. 052-070-05023-3.

Education Directory, Colleges and Universities 1978-79, produced by the US National Center for Education Statistics, lists, state by state, over 3000 post-secondary education institutions, along with enrollments, tuition, telephone numbers, congressional district, principal officers, and so forth: $6.25, US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402; order by Stock No. 017-080-02011-4.

Germany, Japan In DOE Projects

Japan has agreed to contribute about $60 million over the next five years to help finance the upgrading of the Doublet III tokamak, a fusion-research device that's operated for the Department of Energy by the General Atomic Corporation.

The agreement, the first to be established under a research accord signed in May by the two countries, is in line with US efforts to get other countries to share the cost of research activities that the US would probably carry on even without their help. Similar cost-sharing arrangements have been reached in oceanography and in space research, for which a European consortium is building the Spacelab that will ride aboard the otherwise all-American shuttle.

Meanwhile, West Germany is to become a participant in a geothermal project that the US Department of Energy has been sponsoring since 1974 at Fenton Hill, near Sante Fe, New Mexico. The project, operated for DOE by the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, is designed to demonstrate a technique for extracting heat from underground by pumping water through geothermal dry-rock formations. The Germans will contribute scientists and technicians to the project, plus 25 per cent of the costs, up to $2.5 million a year for four years.

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Medical School Study Cites Finance Shifts

Medical Education: Institutions, Characteristics and Programs, a "background paper" recently issued by the Association of American Medical Colleges, provides interesting numerical insights into what's going on inside in the institutions that train this country's physicians. Following are some highlights:

• "In constant (1960) dollars, private school tuition and fees were 2.6 times higher in 1978-79 than in 1960-61; public, non-resident tuition and fees were 1.9 times higher. . . .Evidence of increasing affluence in the pools of applicants and acceptees is that the only categories of parental occupation that increased were those of 'physician' and of 'owner, manager, and administrator.' "

• While first-year minority admissions have risen from 292 to 1443 over the past decade, "it has become evident that major problems in recruitment of minority students have developed and are persisting. Statistics for the year 1978-79 showed that. . .minority students in the freshman classes declined slightly in absolute numbers from a peak of 1473 in 1974-75 to 1443. Moreover, since 1973, the pool of minority applicants has leveled off at just over 3000 per year."

• ". . .biomedical research expenditures delined as a percentage of total health expenditures from a high of 5 per cent in 1966 to 3.3 per cent in 1978. . . .In FY 1978, the NIH supported extramural research projects through grants and contracts in the amount of $2.044 billion. Forty per cent of this research was conducted under contracts, center awards and other nationally targeted programs. Fifteen years earlier, only 20 per cent of NIH research was nationally targeted, the remainder being awarded in the form of grants initiated by individual investigators. This change. . .occurred at a time when the research expenditures of all Institutes except the National Cancer Institute and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute had leveled off or even declined in constant dollar terms."

• "Since 1974, the number of physicians entering research training has declined sharply. In 1977, about 1500-2000 physicians embarked on research training....compared to 3500-4000 such trainees each year for many years prior to 1975."

(Copies of *Medical Education: Institutions, Characteristics and Programs,* 21 pages, are available for $3 each from: AAMC, Membership and Subscriptions Department, One DuPont Circle, Washington, DC 20036.)

National Institutes of Health Support of Investigator-Initiated and Nationally Targeted Research 1960-1975

(Obligations in millions of dollars)

		Investigator-Initiated Research			Nationally Targeted Research			
Fiscal Years	Total Research	Total	Regular Grants	Institutional Research*	Total	Amount Contracts	Special Grants*	Percent of Total Research
1960	$ 188	$ 163	$ 163	$ —	$ 26	$ 20	$ 6	14%
1961	266	211	211	$ —	55	23	32	21%
1962	353	287	269	18	72	31	41	20%
1963	406	331	305	26	77	36	41	19%
1964	471	381	351	30	93	41	53	20%
1965	511	409	370	39	112	54	58	21%
1966	569	445	406	39	135	58	77	23%
1967	667	493	448	45	186	90	96	27%
1968	701	516	461	54	199	97	102	28%
1969	708	508	455	52	213	105	108	30%
1970	686	488	437	50	210	105	105	30%
1971	820	519	472	46	291	157	134	35%
1972	1,021	611	563	47	412	230	182	40%
1973	1,068	112	585	26	457	255	202	43%
1974***	1,402	844	765	79	558	335	223	40%
1975	1,465	859	808	50	606	347	259	41%
1976	1,660	960	909	51	700	368	332	42%
1977	1,827	1,066	1,015	51	761	386	375	42%
1978	2,044	1,229	1,177	52	815	411	404	40%

* Biomedical Research Support Grants
** Includes support for resource centers
*** Includes regular FY 1974 obligations plus release of impounded FY 1973 funds.

SOURCE: National Institutes of Health

Proxmire Gives NSF Another "Golden Fleece"

Senator Proxmire is carrying on with his neanderthal grunting at selected research projects and their government sponsors. But with the Supreme Court having ruled that he's vulnerable to a libel suit for a past episode of this sort, the Wisconsin Democrat is now issuing his remarks from the constitutionally protected turf of Capitol Hill.

The latest target of Proxmire's Golden Fleece Award — issued monthly for what he deems especially egregious waste by a Federal agency — is the National Science Foundation, which, by now, has probably taken the lead as the repeat-recipient of the Senator's attention. This time, NSF gets lambasted for awarding $39,600 to the University of Michigan for Associate Professor Sherry B. Ortner, an anthropologist, to study "Himalayan Mountaineering, Social Change, and the Evolution of Religion Among the Sherpas of Nepal."

Though we can't vouch for it, it's a safe bet that when Proxmire's flunkies came across this project in the NSF grant inventory, they must have experienced prodigious delight, for the project — though obviously a sound piece of scholarship by a highly regarded researcher — does lend itself to Proxmirean ridicule.

Thus, in a statement on the Senate floor on September 27, Proxmire proclaimed that "It has often been said that the Government is foolish enough to send taxpayers' money to the ends of the Earth. Now the NSF has done it. Funding this study raises the question of priorities. The Government is not required to fund every study on every subject in the world. Is this trip really necessary?" the Senator inquired of what presumes to call itself the "world's greatest deliberative body." Since none of his colleagues cares to get involved, for or against, with this legislative clown act, Proxmire's rhetorical question drew no answer, and he proceeded to go into details of Professor Ortner's budget, which, among other things, lists $90 for lanterns and $395 for a down jacket, down sleeping bag, and mattress.

Since the time is fortunately gone when the scientific community deemed it prudent to remain silent in the face of these ignorant blatherings, the Senator's statement was followed on the same day by a University of Michigan expression of praise for Ortner and a statement by her, in which she said:

". . . although the Sherpas have been subject to extremely rapid modernization, they have not manifested many of the social 'pathologies' — alcoholism, juvenile delinquency, and the like — that so often accompany rapid modernization in other parts of the world. And religion, my research indicates, has played a significant role in providing this cultural stability.

"The United States," she continued, "spends millions, if not billions, of dollars of taxpayers' money each year on development programs in Nepal and scores of countries of similar social development. Many such programs fail, often because they are narrowly conceived, and do not take into account the role of non-economic institutions such as religion in the economic process. . . . I need only remind the reader of recent explosive developments in Iran, almost entirely religiously motivated from the point of view of the Iranians, or of the Jonestown massacre, to drive home the point that religion remains an enormously potent force in the modern world."

While all this has been going on, the libel suit that another government-supported researcher, Ronald Hutchinson, brought against Proxmire remains to be adjudicated. The Supreme Court has ruled that Proxmire stepped beyond Congressional immunity when he ridiculed Hutchinson's research during an appearance on a broadcast talk show; the Court also ruled against Proxmire's contention that Hutchinson's receipt of federal research grants put the scientist in the status of a "public figure" whose activities could be freely discussed as a matter of public interest.

Proxmire and a staff aide who is also a defendant in the case are examining the various legal routes open to them following the Supreme Court ruling. The defense originally obtained outside counsel, for which the Senate agreed to pay the fees. But several months ago, the Senate set up a small in-house counsel office to look after the legal problems of its members, and the case has since been transferred there. Thus, the legal costs that Proxmire has been running up in his quest to protect the taxpayers will be paid by the taxpayers.

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In Quotes: Keeping Secrets from the NRC

The following is from an address, "Does the Emperor Have Any Clothes?" by John F. Ahearne, a member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Sept. 11, in New Orleans, to the American Nuclear Society Executive Conference:

●

. . . earlier this year you probably read about two AEC documents found in the unclassified stacks at the Los Alamos library. These documents included weapons design information and really should have been classified. Knowing what kind of weapons design information has been readily available might be useful in trying to understand what are and are not the dangers of proliferation. Consequently, in June I asked one of my assistants to ask the Department of Energy whether I could examine those two documents. The response that we received was that DOE felt the documents would not be of any assistance. DOE pointed out the documents contain classified information in nuclear weapons design, the DOE had been severely censured for improperly marking the reports as unclassified, the error had been corrected, but they are taking a fresh look at the dissemination of all of their weapon related documents. Consequently, they wrote: "In fulfilling our obligations regarding the determination of a need-to-know for information contained in these documents, we must, respectfully, deny your request."

I thought, perhaps I should try again, because, after all, *if* the NRC is the guardian of U.S. non-proliferation policy, then it might be necessary for the Commissioners to understand what kind of information has been publicly available on designing weapons. Therefore I wrote to Major General Bratton, Director of the Office of Military Applications in DOE. I mentioned that the NRC also was considering what revisions would be appropriate for our regulations which address the threshold for physical protection requirements. These supposedly are set to prevent distribution of enough material to make nuclear weapons. General Bratton, however, was very clear that this was not the NRC's business. He replied: "It is our view that these documents contain no material directly related to the areas of responsibility of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission . . . ." At least for the guardians of our nuclear weapons business, there is no doubt that the NRC does not have a need-to-know about nuclear weapons. . . .

Pimentel to Leave NSF Post

George C. Pimentel plans to leave the number two spot at the National Science Foundation to return to the University of California, Berkeley, where he's been designated to succeed the retiring Melvin Calvin next July as director of the Laboratory of Chemical Biodynamics.

Pimentel, 57, was a member of the Berkeley faculty from 1949 to 1977, when he was appointed deputy director of NSF. Calvin, a Nobel laureate, is founding director of the laboratory, which is a division of the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory.

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